

Project ABC Receives a SAMHSA Award for Excellence in Community Communications and Outreach



Project ABC is a collaborative partnership among professionals in child welfare, mental health and community services designed to create a system of care for young children in the Los Angeles County area who would benefit from mental health services. Our goal is to ensure that children from birth to 5 years have access to services that are family-centered, strength-based, and culturally competent.

Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), DMH is the grantee for the project, and Children's Medical Director Dr. William Arroyo is the Principal Investigator. The funded partners include Children's Institute, Inc., Pacific Asian Counseling Services, For The Child, and the DMH-operated TIES for Families. Over the last six years, PABC has served over a thousand young children and their families, trained hundreds of professionals in system of care principals and early childhood mental health techniques and improved collaborative services in SPA 8.

Along with direct service and workforce development, two of the key features of a system of care grant are parent involvement and prevention. So we were very pleased when Children's Institute, Inc. received funding from First 5 LA for Parent Support Circles (PSCLAC) to create peer-led parent support groups across LA County.



Over the 30 months of the grant, working through community-based partners, PSCLAC provided 108 groups in Spanish, English and Mandarin to over 1,000 parents. To accomplish this task, PSCLAC partners recruited over 100 parents who stood out as “natural helpers” and future leaders. They received extensive training and ongoing reflective

supervision. The nine group topics ranged from self-care to nurturing infants, behavior challenges, men nurturing children and children with special needs.

The results were impressive. The evaluation demonstrated that parents showed significant increases in social connectedness, a key protective factor in the Strengthening Families model. Importantly, parents who reported being the most isolated at the beginning showed the largest gains.

In recognition of this effort, PABC recently received the bronze award from SAMHSA in a national competition for Excellence in Community Communications and Outreach. In previous years, PABC has received other awards, including some first prizes. But this one, which reflects our commitment to building parent leadership and promoting family well-being is of particular importance.

